

# STEREOTYPES

- Stereotypes are mostly based on generalizations, simplifications of reality and representations accepted by society that are rarely questioned. These notions are often simplistic, uniform and preconceived and evolve over time according to historical changes and social beliefs.
- Stereotypes about youth's behaviours, attitudes and thoughts are promoted in large part by the media, which plays an influential role in their lives.
- They might also be constructed, reinforced and driven by schools, family, art, culture, fashion, etc.

*«When boys say that the women are supposed to do this or that...boys criticize a girl's figure...I think some boys have no respect for girls.»  
(girl, high school)*

## What is the Relation between School and Gender Stereotypes?

- Within the school system, gender-based stereotypes have an important impact. For instance, girls are encouraged to focus on subjects that are considered to be more feminine such as languages and boys are more encouraged to understand science subjects. This can have long term consequences.
- When youth do not fit their assigned gender stereotypes (for instance a feminine boy), it can quickly lead to difficult situations, particularly with teasing and bullying.

*«Ha! If I wear that, they'll think I'm a nerd. It's the same thing for boys.»  
(girl, grade school)*

*«...but in general being sexy is how you dress and your attitude and how you fit in with people.»  
(girl, high school)*

## How Do Stereotypes Relate to the Transition from Grade School to High School?

- In addition to the anxiety resulting from high school expectations, stereotypes can be a source of stress, worry and uneasiness, making the transition to high school more difficult.
- The prevalence of hypersexualization, the imposition of beauty standards and the integration of so-called feminine and masculine norms may heighten anxiety.
- Stereotypes reinforce the idea that youth need to be «like everyone else» and act according to the codes of their peer group in school.
- Students who do not fit the stereotypes will often have more difficulty asserting their differences and will tend to act in a stereotypical manner out of a fear of being different or being bullied.

## Why Have Workshops on the Topic of Stereotypes?

- These workshops raise awareness about stereotypes and equip youth with tools to understand their impact.
- Encouraging youth to assert their uniqueness and accompanying them in the process is integral to facilitating their transition from grade school to high school.
- By developing critical thinking, participants will discover options for breaking stereotypes.

«Girls worry about their makeup  
and their hair.»  
(boy, grade school)